Digital Marketing Institute

INTRODUCTION TO DIGITAL MARKETING

Transcript

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LESSON 1: PRINCIPLES OF DIGITAL MARKETING

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CONCEPTS

Hello, I'm Philippe Polman, a leading digital consultant with extensive experience in project management, digital strategy, sales and brand management. Before we begin our journey into concepts of digital marketing, we should think about how we would define digital marketing.

The advent of the internet and the number of devices used in platforms that people use to connect and share content has given rise to the digital marketing era. Simply put, this online space is where you will find your consumers and grow your business.

Speaking concisely, digital marketing is the use of new media or digital technology to achieve marketing and business goals. If we wish to be more specific, digital marketing is defined within the parameters of technologies using digital formats and the internet. This ranges from computers to mobile technology and even things like digital billboards.

Moreover, digital marketing encompasses online shared experiences such as social media or digital marketing software. These, in turn, help marketers create, distribute, and track their campaign on digital platforms to drive success. Two of the most important principles in digital marketing are outbound and inbound marketing.

Outbound marketing begins with the brand advertiser pushing out a message to a specific target audience with the objective being to drive awareness of a product or service. This is done by rapidly spreading word of the campaign, product, or service to the target audience using, for example, visual display banners, and video formats multiple times to ensure people remember the product.

This is known as drive product recall and is achieved through audience reach and repetition. It is your more traditional way to do marketing. Essentially, you have a message, you have an audience and you are pushing that message to your audience.

Your hope is that the message captures your audience’s attention. This concept applies to digital marketing as much as traditional marketing. Inbound marketing is the exact opposite. It's almost like reverse marketing. Inbound marketing involves trying to pull your audience towards your content, brand, or service.

It is about attracting those people who are already interested in your product or service so that they seek you out and engage. With inbound marketing, potential customers find you through channels such as blogs, search engines, email subscriptions, word of mouth, and online reviews/recommendations.

As a marketer, you are attempting to find ways to create the conditions where people are drawn to your brand via your content with the objective of turning them into a customer. In today's business world, inbound marketing is the most important aspect to digital marketing as it allows you to attract customers who consider your content or service relevant to them.

The strength of inbound marketing is user intent. What do we mean by user intent? In essence, it is the audience who have the internal drive to take action to find your product. This action is based on their own needs and how and when they want to proceed with a sale or conversion.

Good inbound marketing provides efficient and effective roots for your audience to come to your brand. It stands apart in its effectiveness at encouraging audience action. Particularly when that

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audience has a finite attention span from consuming a limitless amount of content on their devices and platforms.

Digital marketing comprises, among other things, three different media channels: owned, paid, and earned. Owned media is the media that you create and manage. Paid media is media or advertising that you have paid for to drive banner and video visibility or clicks and traffic to your product, website, or service.

Finally, earned media is free publicity generated by consumers, PR, influencers, and people who speak about and share content related to your brand or product. Earned media is generated either in response to content you've shared or via voluntary mentions.

In many cases, these people will be your brand advocates and will actively promote your brand because they like you. While it is important to consider each media type independently, you must also consider how they can work together and harmoniously to produce an all-encompassing successful digital marketing campaign.

For instance, you should explore how paid media will promote your own content. And, in turn, how your own content will help to influence earned media. To begin, owned media incorporates a company's own content, packaging, point of sale and the people who come into contact with consumers.

It's the stuff a brand creates to promote itself. Owned media promotes your brand in a very personal way, by exhibiting your company's values and highlighting what the product or company does. Some key questions you should ask when considering owned media are what am I going to talk about?

What do I want people to see? And, what type of message do I want to get across to my audience? Think of owned media as a source for developing your brand personality. For example, when you post on social media, try to avoid posting something dull and boring.

Instead, aim to post something that is true to your values and what you represent. Some benefits of owned media include the cost-efficiency, flexibility, longevity, and power of developing a go-to platform for your audience. Owned media is important for creating trust and legitimacy in the market. It acts as a main platform for communicating all that the company is, sells, and does.

However, there are challenges to driving audience engagement from owned media, as it can take time to build a reputation and trust that guarantees high levels of traffic to your website, blog, or other digital assets. Our second media type, paid media, comprises any form of media designed to promote your brand or content on the internet for a fee.

Examples of this include social media advertising, paid search, display adverts, or paid influencers. Paid media helps you to scale up your digital marketing campaign and reach more people than non-paid formats. In tandem with various reporting tools, such as Google Analytics, you will be able to analyze who is seeing your media and how the audience engages and interacts with your campaigns.

This, in turn, enables you to adjust and optimize your paid media performance. With paid media, you can take ad formats and brand content and show it to people who you believe will find it relevant, useful, or engaging. Essentially, this means you have control over where, when, and what is seen.

The drawback is that you have to pay for it. Outbound paid media is useful for building awareness and generating familiarity as it provides the basis for audience reach, ad repetition, and defined audience targeting.

Inbound paid media like paid search and types of remarketing are great ways to drive sales and conversions. However, with the advent of ad blockers for example, there are challenges to the efficacy of paid media, particularly with today's ad saturation and the ability to skip or report ads.

Finally, earned media is the ultimate goal for brands and digital marketers. It is where you have created a good piece of content, shared it through various platforms, including paid promotion. And, now, people are engaging with it and actively sharing it with their friends because they view it as important, relevant, interesting, or even funny.

Effectively, earned media is about people interacting with your content without you having to put in the effort to drive traffic. Furthermore, your brand can borrow the legitimacy of normal people sharing your content and this builds trust and credibility far quicker and far more effectively than paid media ever could.

Earned media comprises shares, reviews, mentions, and reposts anything that allows your content to appear on people's social media timelines, for example. That is why earned media is so valuable. It has already established a level of trust. It comes personally recommended and this is something a paid ad cannot do.

People will question the relevance of a paid ad because of its very nature, because of the fact that it has been paid for. Some benefits of earned media include the fact that it creates credibility, is organic, and tends to live on longer than paid or owned media. However, as this type of media is at the mercy or discretion of internet users, particularly in an age where content can go viral, It can become difficult to control the direction your earned media moves. In worst-case scenarios, viral content adopts unintended negative meanings. Also, it can be difficult to understand how effective earned media is in driving action or resonating with your audience. We should always consider if it is bringing people to your brand or content for the intended reasons you set out.

TRADITIONAL AND DIGITAL MARKETING

Now, let’s look at new and traditional marketing, and how strategies on both sides align and differ.

Traditional media, or old media, are often defined as the “established or traditional means of mass communication, especially compared with digital methods”. Quite simply, media that didn’t develop with the digital era are the ones most likely to be considered as traditional and part of a traditional media strategy.

Traditional marketing media includes direct marketing, outdoor, print, TV and radio broadcast, and “word of mouth” referrals.

Direct Marketing: This involves promoting and selling directly to the end buyer from the manufacturer with no other media owner involved. For instance, it includes letters or flyers, coupons, brochures, and general any other print material delivered to a consumer’s mailbox or hand.

Print: This is advertising that uses physically printed media to reach consumers and prospects, such as newspapers, brochures, and magazine ads

Outdoor: Similar to print but on a larger scale, these are billboards (also called 48 sheets or the even larger 96 sheets), bus stops and smaller placements (also called 6 sheets), bus sides, building wraps and installations, and so on.

Broadcast: Known as on-air advertising, it is the primary revenue generator for commercial television and radio stations. Examples include film, TV, product placement, program sponsorship, cinema, and radio.

Referral: Referrals often happen spontaneously. This form of marketing involves promoting products or services to new customers through referrals, usually by word of mouth. For instance, it includes fidelity cards with vouchers and discounts for sponsorship.

Even if traditional and digital marketing can work hand in hand, they are profoundly different in their communication style and effect on consumers.

Based on these differences, marketers need to strategically plan where they will invest and what will be the best ratio between traditional and digital media budget. Each media will talk to a different audience and have a different impact on the audience's perception of a company. We will deep dive on the differences in the next few slides.

We will now take a closer look at four of the five categories.

Mass/Individual: When people are looking at cinema or TV, or listening to radio, the experience of the message through these media is a group experience. The medium is consumed in a group situation, such as watching TV with the family, listening to the radio in the car with other people, or going to catch a movie in a full movie theater. These are group experiences where all eyes and ears are receiving the same stimuli.

Consider social media, email, and apps. Although the medium is shared, the content is customized for the individual. Most people use the same social media, email client, and apps to consume content. However, thanks to technology, consumers present at the same time can see an infinite variation of content based on who is logged in - this is an individual experience.

Passive/Active Audiences: When planning an overall media strategy, depending on the goals, marketers will create more engaging ad formats on media that appeal to a more passive audience. Digital and traditional can be active and passive. However, digital marketing leads to more active media engagement because of the nature of the formats and channels it involves.

For example, when an ad is showing on TV, the audience has no means of responding to the message. This is a passive medium.

Active media are any form of media where the consumer can physically engage with the content, such as Facebook, Twitter, and Google. Content on digital platforms has been developed to be highly engaging – consumers can share, comment on, like, tweet, and pin it. This gives digital marketing an additional active characteristic.

One-to-One/One-to-Many: In traditional marketing, the message given is singular. In other words, because of the group experience, the traditional marketers will develop a single message that will deliver the same content to individuals. In digital marketing, marketers can create multiple versions of the same message, and target users whose profile definitely fits their target audience. The brand experience aims to treat the consumer as an individual by delivering personalized, relevant content.

Outbound/Inbound: This is a push strategy that begins with the brand or advertiser showing ads to as many people as possible, hoping that it will resonate with some of them. For this reason, it is harder to track and more expensive.

On the opposite side, inbound strategy as we defined earlier aims to attract interested consumers to your content, brand, and offer. This marketing model was greatly facilitated with the development of digital technology, as we talked about earlier. The use of cookie tracking, SEO, topics, blogs, and influencers helps brands resonate with a specific audience so they come to you.

3i PRINCIPLES

The Digital Marketing Institute has developed a methodology that helps to guide digital marketers towards achieving their goals. This methodology, which is central to the key components of digital marketing, comprises three principles: initiate, integrate, and iterate. Collectively, this is referred to as the Three-I Principles. The principles are designed to get you to think about a digital marketing strategy or campaign from start to finish. This helps marketers ensure they are hitting key targets, reflecting on what worked, and understanding what requires refinement.

One: The initiate principle of digital marketing states that the customer is the starting and finishing point for all digital activities. The core of this principle can be summed up as let the customer decide. Two: Iterate emphasizes the importance of tweaking a digital marketing campaign in response to user interaction. In short, the more iterations undertaken, the more effective the campaign becomes as you seek to adjust and scale based on feedback, customer engagement, and data. Three: The integrate principle is about taking your efforts across digital channels to drive an outcome that is greater than the individual channels on their own. This also involves integrating both digital and any traditional marketing efforts in a unified way into your overall marketing campaign strategy. Let's take a look at each of the principles in more detail and discover the key questions we should be asking ourselves when deploying the Three-I methodology.

For initiate, you want to start with what the customer actually wants and work backwards through your strategy towards your objective. Consider who they are, what are they interested in? What resonates with them? And, what products have they already tested? What actions can you take using digital platforms that will add value to your organization and customer experience? This insight can be uncovered through customer research. In this way, you should try to understand how your customer would like to be talked to. You can use consumer research, past data collected from your campaigns as well as any internal or commissioned company research to draw insights to guide your strategy. It's a good idea to research any roadblocks that your strategy needs to overcome in order to effectively reach the audience. By starting with the customer and translating the customer views and insights into a tangible digital strategy, you increase your chance of achieving your goals.

Then, the iterate stage is about testing and improving your activity now that you understand more about the audience, the channels they use, and how they view your brand online. In terms of digital messaging targeting and channels, you know what you're going to do but you want to make sure it's going to work. So during the iterate stage you apply your learnings from live or historical customer engagements with your campaign to improve performance. The iterate part is about A-B testing. Putting your brand out there and modifying targeting messaging to adapt and optimize your digital campaign to deliver on your objectives. In the iterate stage ask, do they engage with it? If they are not engaged, what can you change to make them more engaged? Did you go through the right path? Did you position your product in a way that resonates in the market? Are you filling the market gaps? Is your content engaging? Is it interesting enough? Is your audience targeting correct? Are your keyword choices driving the desired action from the audience?

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Once you've done all this testing, you can begin to improve by doing more of what worked and pulling back on what didn't work with a view to producing a refined campaign. This applies across time as you can use your learning during and after each campaign to continually get insights from online engagement with your customers and then acting on the results. At this point, it is time to start thinking about integration. The integration stage is focused on two parts. Selling your strategy to get approval from the organization to move forward. And then, integrating your findings and strategy across the different channels. In order to achieve the first part, you can rely on the data uncovered during the initiate phase and apply the findings to the broader business goals and challenges by showcasing how your strategy works for the business. Additionally, if you plan on using new channels or testing new digital marketing software, you might want to think about how these integrate into the existing processes and organization of your team. Here, you are helping the digital transformation mindset of your organization by integrating digital into all the relevant aspects of business processes. From this point, you can then look at integrating your campaign across multiple digital channels and any traditional channels if appropriate. In essence, the Digital Marketing Institute's Three-I Principle methodology is a key system for devising, executing, and reflecting on your digital marketing activity to drive optimal performance.

DIGITAL CHANNELS

Research can help you make informed decisions about what channels you should use and prioritize. Especially when working within the limits of a budget, marketers need to choose the channels that will cost-effectively help them to reach the set objectives. In some cases, you may only use one or two, and in others you may include multiple channels in your plan.

So, what are the types of digital channels available to marketers today? They are Email Marketing, Paid Search (or Pay-Per-Click, PPC), Organic Search (or Search Engine Optimization, SEO), Website Optimization, Marketing Automation, Display Advertising, Content Marketing, and Social Media Marketing.

Email and Automation Marketing: Marketing emails and automation are used for conversion and loyalty. Emails and automation aim to reach out to the customers at the right time to lead them to a conversion destination, such as a landing page. Common email objectives include raising interest, converting sales, and retaining customers by providing additional value to the brand and product.

Paid Search (PPC): This channel will help you get high value traffic and clicks from an interested audience. As the audience is actively searching for keyword related to their issue, using paid search helps to bring you top of the list when customers are searching and ready to buy or take action.

Organic Search (SEO): Optimizing for organic search is a key tactic in digital marketing because it leads to discovery, awareness, interest, and conversion without paid effort. SEO makes your content visible to the audience and easily searchable on Google and other search engines without the need to pay for clicks.

Website Optimization: Optimizing your website is essential to create an environment where visitors can engage with your brand content and easily take valuable actions on your site, such as buying a product or contacting your team with minimal fuss. Optimizing speed, navigation, responsiveness, content, and conversion processes will help drive more of those valuable actions and lead to better performance.

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Display Advertising: Thanks to the targeting capabilities of online display, companies can target audience interests, age, gender, community, keywords, and more. So the ads shown to the audience are highly relevant, which drives higher awareness and consideration as well as traffic.

Content Marketing: Content marketing is key to the inbound strategy, which in turn is central to a digital marketing strategy. Well-developed and targeted content increases brand personality and likability. Through content, consumers discover your brand values, experience, and world, and can identify with the brand but also learn more about the product and how it solves their problems.

Content strategy impacts all stages of the buyer's journey as it is central to all points of contact, and it is the final destination for a lot of marketing tactics. Content is also key in going viral and creating word of mouth as users will share content that is impactful and humorous, or that surprises them.

Social Media Marketing: Social media platforms are primary channels for creating awareness and interest through content and social engagement. Advertising can be targeted and re-targeted to appeal to the conversion objective. Social channels are also important channels in the Retention stage of the buyer's journey as the primary platform for customer to get information and updates from the company.

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LESSON 2: DEVELOPING MARKETING OBJECTIVES

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SMART OBJECTIVES

When you start thinking about your digital marketing strategy, one of the key considerations is objectives. A well-known convention for writing down efficient objectives that will satisfy business and marketing stakeholders is to use the SMART model. When defining your objectives, they should have the following qualities:

SMART: S, Specific, M, Measurable, A, Achievable, R, Relevant, and T, Time-bound. If you keep that in mind, you'll have the framework to make sure that your objectives are complete, understandable, measurable, and can actually help you develop a better strategy.

Before starting work on your goals, it is useful to discuss business objectives with the relevant stakeholders and understand how and where these are achieved on the business side.

Having a specific objective means having a well-defined and clear goal, stating exactly what you aim to achieve. The objective needs to be crystal clear, and anyone who reads it, even outside the Marketing department, should understand what it hopes to achieve.

Here are some tips to make your objectives specific:

1. Think simple, sensible, and significant.

2. When defining your goals, think about the following questions: What do I want to accomplish? Why is it important? Who is involved? Where is it located? And what resources or limits are involved?

3. Write down a summary of your goal and reshape it to be as specific and clear as possible.

4. The goal should describe an action that involves the customer.

5. Sometimes a unique objective is clearer and more realistic than having too many that will dilute your impact and focus.

Once you have specified the aim of your objective, the second step is to make the objective measurable. This means that you need to have an obtainable goal that can be measured using numbers – for example, increase website visits by 10% by June. You can verify this aspect of your objective from the following questions:

- What are the current key performance indicators (KPIs) for the business?
- What digital data can you leverage? This includes traffic, cost per click (CPC), lead generation, social media tracking, among others.
- What is the current situation and what evolution do you expect to see?
- How much?
- How many?
- How will you know when is the objective has been accomplished?

At the end of the campaign, you should be able to look back and precisely quantify your impact and be able to translate the numbers in a business target.

Now you need to think about the execution of this objective. Is it too ambitious? Do you have the resources necessary to achieve this goal? It's the reality check. Crafting an achievable objective means that it is reachable within the current available skills, budget, and time, and it takes into account the potential constraints or limits that exist.

In order to define the achievability of your objective, think about the following points:

- How can you accomplish this goal?
- How realistic is the goal, based on other constraints, such as financial factors?
- What is the allocated budget that you currently have for this?
- How many hours a week can the team work on this? Who will be the point of contact responsible for achieving the goal?
- What things may stop the team from reaching their goals?

At this stage, you need to ask yourself whether this objective is relevant in the bigger picture. Remembering what we said at the beginning of this section, the marketing objectives should tie in nicely with the business objectives. Even if you started by studying the business objective to develop the marketing one, once the marketing objective is crafted, take a step back and check that it is still relevant.

Here are some questions you can ask to check your objective against the overall goals and business priority include:

- Does this seem worthwhile?
- Is this the right time?
- Does this match our other efforts or needs?
- Is this the right team? Are you the right person to reach this goal?
- Is it applicable in the current socio-economic environment?

An objective needs be achieved within a set timeframe. This helps to create focus, and meet deadlines milestones.

Finally, your objective needs to be time-bound in order to set limits to the time spent on this particular objective and to fit the business timeframe in terms of target, product development, and other major time-bound events.

A time-bound goal can be identified by answering these questions:

- When?
- What can I do today?
- What can I do six weeks from now?
- What can I do six months from now?
- Based on research, what is the appropriate timeframe that should be given to achieve this goal?

Selecting the length of time you think it will take to reach your goal will help you figure out how aggressive you need to be with your marketing efforts.

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LESSON 3: DIGITAL RESEARCH

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AUDIENCE RESEARCH

The main research that all marketers use before even thinking about the campaign is audience research. Audience research is designed to establish the size, composition, and characteristics of a group of individuals who are or could be potential customers. It's important to note that this research is about the people and individuals who make up your target audience. The goal of all audience research is to find consumer insights that can help you deliver on your campaign or business objectives. Because the goal of a digital marketing strategy is to influence the buyer's journey, marketers need to connect with the audience by knowing what they think, how they behave, and how they live their lives. You should know your audience as well as you know your best friend.

One of the key benefits to conducting audience research is the ability to identify obstacles. For example, are there other brands trying to communicate with your audience but not experiencing much success? Why? By being aware of such obstacles, you can then develop appropriate personalized content that is more relevant to your audience. Moreover, you want to find ways to stay ahead of your customers and discover solutions that anticipate future needs they may have. Audience research allows you to understand your customers and ultimately makes you more effective in delivering your digital marketing strategy by catering to their needs.

To focus efforts, it is common practice to create a buyer-persona. This is a description of your ideal customer, in terms of motivations, demographics, and channels used to access the internet. Buyer-personas help digital marketers choose the channels and messaging that will resonate with their ideal customer and effectively deliver on objectives. Before we examine the various tools available to us, let's look at the data that you'll want to gather when you conduct audience research. So we have three types of data: demographic, psychographics, and behavioral. You want to have a good understanding of the three of these because each of them will give you different insights into your audience. Let's start with demographics.

Demographics are the hard facts about your audience. Some examples of facts would be whether they are male or female? How old they are? What their profession is? Whether they are married? Where they live? Whether they go to college? This information is about their social aspect and relative place within their society. It's not very personal but it helps you peel back the first layer of understanding your audience. It gives you an initial glance at their make-up. The socioeconomic data in demographics include gender, age, income level, occupation, marital status, location, number of children, education, religion, family-size, ethnicity, nationality, social class, industry, number of computers, and generation.

Psychographics are much more detailed and complex. They can uncover anything that your audience might be interested in, their beliefs, life goals, or opinions. It's about gaining a deep understanding of your audiences' aspirations. So that when you talk to them, you are speaking a language that resonates with what they really want. Psychographics can include activities, interests, opinions, attitudes, values, lifestyle, and loyalty. It's about their lifestyle, their personality. For instance, maybe you want to reach someone that's 21 years old and works as an accountant but also loves basketball. As there can be many different people-types in your audience, you need to conduct demographic and psychographic research so that you really know who they are and avoid making any assumptions. This will help you navigate away from potential pitfalls or running campaigns that target the wrong audience.

Finally, we have behavioral data. This is about how people use your product or even how they navigate on your website and how they use the different media that you want to use as your

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marketing channels. What do they do on Facebook? How long do they stay? Why do they click? Where do they click? All of this is very important because it will allow you to transform the journey of your audience on your website and social media, and know exactly where you need to target your effort. This data can tell you a lot about your customer. For example, when are they on your website? What time are they on Facebook? Maybe it's in the morning, maybe it's at night? You don't want to miss those opportunities to engage with your customer. By observing what people do and how they behave online using your product or using your competitors' products, you are able to understand the limitations of the user experience and perception to improve your message and overcome obstacles. Behavioral data can include online activity, such as social media use, website visits, product and content use, where they click, what the usual consumer path is on your site, and other relevant buying habits including brand preferences and product usage. So audience research is really about giving you all the context and information you need. It is central to any digital marketing strategy because if you don't have this data, how do you know where and how you're going to communicate?

AUDIENCE LISTENING TOOLS

By definition, audience listening is the process of monitoring what people are saying on digital media channels about your brand, your products, competitors. This insight can help you devise a strategy that will influence consumers based on what you've "heard" from listening to them.

Every day, countless members of your target audience discuss topics that relate to your brand, either directly or indirectly. They don't care whether you hear about it or not, and they're not taking special steps to comment and discuss their topics of interest on your social media channels. So you might not hear what they are saying. By engaging in audience listening, you make these insights visible to the marketing and business organization.

The main types of platform that marketers will use in the digital landscape to conduct audience research are social media, marketing research companies, survey providers, and behavior analytics platforms. Using these tools can help marketers focus their attention on the type of content and messaging they need to develop in order to engage their target audience. You need to know what media is the best point of contact, raise awareness, and understand the words and images that the audience will want to engage with. All these tools will give access to direct consumer insights such as tweets, comments, engagements, or third-party data analysis.

Social Media

You can use your social media analytics and platforms to analyze the existing data on your community of followers, and their likes and friends. Start creating a picture of who your current customers are. You can also research social media to look at audiences that follow competitors and understand more about their profile. This goes across all social media platforms that have strong analytic tools developed, such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Tumblr, Pinterest, and LinkedIn.

Social media platforms gather knowledge or insights gained from analyzing social media data. These are useful for removing the manual work by accessing collected and analyzed data directly.

Some examples of social intelligence tools are Hootsuite, HubSpot, Social Intel, Nuvi, and Affinio. Most of these are paid services because they provide extra data visualization and analysis. However, they enable you to gather the data from several social media platforms in one place and also monitor conversations.

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Marketing Research

Marketers can tap into secondary research developed by third-party research companies such as PRIZM from Claritas, eMarketer, Euromonitor, Nielsen, and Spark. These can be given as free reports or you might require a business subscription to the platform providing the research data. You can also choose to commission market research specifically designed for your business, bearing in mind this can be time consuming and expensive.

Usually, because it is less expensive, marketers will use digital insights as a quick way to get strong data. Bear in mind that, because the data is a public and shared resource, it will less likely bring new insights or decisions. A competitor with access to the same data might have already taken the direction you are considering. The more specific the research is, the better because this can help you to successfully communicate with the audience. Bear this in mind when using secondary data, as it is always better to have a mix.

Surveys

Suppose you want to collect specific data related to your product or a specific trend you are interested in. Researching within your current audience using online survey platforms is a cheap and convenient way to carry primary audience research.

Platforms such as SurveyMonkey, Qualtrics, Zoomerang, or AYTM surveys are a great source of primary data. They can be very powerful if they are well designed and ask the right questions. Also, they can be sent to hundreds or thousands of customers as required. Online interviews are another way to collect qualitative primary research, and direct interaction with relevant customers using tools such as Nebu or Skype.

Behavior Analytics

Behavioral analytics focuses on providing insight into the actions of your audience and customers. Behavioral analytics is used in various scenarios to identify opportunities to optimize in order to realize specific business outcomes. Google Search data provides insightful sources of consumer behavior because you can see what they are looking for.

You can then see what they do on your website after they search and click on your link. This enables you to see the full journey to help understand what triggered their interest.

You can also see where traffic and clicks are concentrated on your website using heatmaps. This involves using tools to color code the website to see the actions that people take there, where they move their mouse, and where they click. Knowing how people interact with your website is invaluable information for digital marketers.

CULTURAL RESEARCH

Marketers in the digital era have an array of tools that can be used to conduct cultural research. These tools are also useful for classic audience research but make it easier to target specific cultures. The most common tools used for cultural research include:

Social Media conversations: Keywords, Facebook groups, Twitter communities, hashtags, and influencers are a powerful way to understand how a specific community is talking and interacting, and how involved they are with your brand or product.

Research: Audience research firms will develop their own research on specific cultural groups and make it available for marketers. This can be done by firms such as eMarketer, Nielsen, and so on, but also by specialized firms that will create dedicated reports and case studies about what made or broke brands when working on cross-cultural campaigns. Scholars' research is also a beneficial source of insight, as this can be more in-depth and really targeted to specific sub-cultures.

Dedicated platforms: Another way to use digital media to develop your cultural research is to follow the consumer journey through content. By finding and visiting niche websites, influencers' accounts, dedicated apps, bloggers, and forums, you can learn about all the previous issues we have already discussed, and see what values are most important to the cultural group. This can be even prolonged by consuming other forms of media such as TV shows of movies that resonate with the audience.

COMPETITIVE RESEARCH

Competitive research provides insight into what the competition is doing in terms of marketing, what their message and positioning is, how well they are received, what part of the market they are targeting, and the success they are achieving online. When researching the competition, there are three insights that you want to look for:

Strategy: Understanding what media and content strategy your competition has adopted can help reduce friction and prevent overlapping throughout the process of competitive research.

Target market: Understanding your competitors' target audience more in-depth can provide insights on your own target audience and how it should differ, based on how your product solves the problem for them. It also can help you understand the challenge, depending on the similarity of your target audience.

Message: Understanding the competition's message will enable you to differentiate yourself from the competition. Brands with similar messages get less credit and visibility and cause confusion in consumers' minds. Your brand needs a differentiation element that will make it stand out at all stages of the buyer's journey. Ideally your message should be better and resonate with the audience so it stands out more than the competition.

With digital media today, companies share such more information with their customer than before and must be more transparent, as required by the public. This means that more information about competitors is available and is easily collectable through one place: The internet! Different platforms are involved in the collection of competitive insights:

Social Media: Similar to gathering audience insights, social media is an infinite source of insights, conversations, hashtags, mentions, reviews, comment, and so on. Using dedicated monitoring tools to centralize your research can help you keep an eye on what the audience says about your competition (be it positive or negative), where they delighted the customers, and where they lack quality. Additionally, you can see how people compare your business to others and, for example, how much more volume their brand generates in terms of community density. Some tools to help you with this include Twitter, Feedly, and Brandwatch – all of which are designed to track conversations.

Competitor assets: As simple as it sounds, visiting your competition's website, downloading their white papers or quarterly reports, listening to their webcasts or podcasts, and participating in their online events is a great way to understand their business, how they position themselves, and how they deliver their message. By putting yourself in the consumer's shoes, you can understand how the

buyer's journey is designed and how your competition goes on converting their audience at each stage. For example, through their blog, you can understand their primary focus and how they position themselves as experts in the market. You can also understand the traffic on your competition's assets through software such Alexa and understand where their traffic is generated and thus refine your media strategy.

Search: Search is a powerful insight into how people find a product and what they are looking for. By analyzing searches, you can know what the consumer problem is and how it is solved. You can use search tools such as SEMrush or SpyFu to understand how your competition ranks for specific keywords. Are they ranked on keywords you are not using? What is their ranking? What is the advantage on these specific keywords? Additionally, you can search to keep track of new content generated by your competition by using Google Alerts.

Content analysis: In addition to social media monitoring, you can use tools to monitor other forms of content that your competition is distributing. This can help you understand their media strategy. You can follow their newsletter with Owletter, use Kompyte to track their website changes, and so on. Many tools exist for you to track changes, traffic, bounce rate, click rate, reviews, and so on. This can be used to help you better understand your own position and where you have to go, but can also be used to set targets if you are working as a challenger on the market.

INDUSTRY TREND RESEARCH

Industry trend research involves monitoring changes and advancements that are taking place in and around an industry category in order to stay ahead of the competition.

Industry trend analysis enables a company to develop a competitive strategy that best defends against the competitive forces or influences them in its favor. The key to developing a competitive strategy is to understand the sources of the competitive forces. One example of a methodology to conducting industry trend research is Porter's Five Forces, which we will look at in the next slide.

According to Porter's Five Forces, customers, suppliers, substitutes, potential entrants, and competitors are crucial to evaluating industry trends and competition.

- Industry rivalry (degree of competition among existing firms): Intense competition leads to reduced profit potential for companies in the same industry.
- Threat of substitutes (products or services): Availability of substitute products will limit your ability to raise prices.
- Bargaining power of buyers: Powerful buyers have a significant impact on prices.
- Bargaining power of suppliers: Powerful suppliers can demand premium prices and limit your profit.
- Barriers to entry (threat of new entrants): These act as a deterrent against new competitors.

The role of industry trend research is to understand the movement within these forces, to prepare and ultimately be able to predict their direction in order to adapt a strategy that will strengthen the company's presence on the market.

Keeping up with audience's communication style and medium: This is highly beneficial for companies by providing behavioral changes across many areas in the industry. It can inform a company that users are no longer reacting to tweets but are now engaging more with videos, that they are no longer using this platform but another, or that they are looking for new ways of solving a similar problem, for example.

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Identify market opportunities: This information on consumer and competition behavior helps performance based on the audience communication style and medium, identifying market opportunities with new needs or values that become important to consumer. They can help you to plan the next marketing strategies based on the predictive analysis of market trends.

Plan next marketing effort: By predicting needs, you can increase customers' loyalty by providing them with a solution to future issue that they may face. A company needs to adapt to the existing trends of its market while looking for new trends that may present an opportunity. If a company doesn't adapt to the trends, it is likely to lose its audience by becoming irrelevant.

There are a variety of tools available to track industry trends. Here are some examples.

Social media monitoring: By identifying the density of conversation on social media you can find trends and insights where consumers are looking and what they want next. Tools such as TweetDeck, Google Trends, and Twitter trending topics can help you identify the patterns online to see what is trendy at the moment. This is a reliable source of instant trend information. However, it is a reactive approach, as you might find a trend only after it is already well known.

Market research reports: Most industry trend research studies are conducted by research firms that have the resources to survey, interview, and analyze trend data and then make actionable reports. Some examples of online companies that provide regular free insights on industry trends are Euromonitor, eMarketer, Qualtrics, Nielsen, Crimson Hexagon, and PwC. The advantage of these types of firms is the availability and quality of the data, as these are generally large scale and statistically more accurate. Requesting reports from research firms specifically for your company can be a way to find trends that are more granular and resonate more directly with your target audience. However, it can also be expensive and time consuming.

Search analytics: Keywords are fantastic indicators of trends. Much like the stock market, you can look at the keywords that are on the rise and bet on their evolution and the insights that they can provide. The main tools for analyzing keywords are Google Ads and Google Trends, but other tools include the Amazon Keyword Trends tool or Wordtracker.

Academic research: Individuals who look at the market and think about its potential evolution are great sources of predictive trend research. Scholars study specific behavior by using hard data, theory, and testing, and then can develop insights into what the future of an industry is likely to be. Therefore, academics and scholars are a great source of predictive analysis who can provide insights into the development of the digital marketing strategy. You can find research from universities, such as MIT, Harvard, Oxford, and so on, but also through scholar databases such as Google Scholar or Base.

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LESSON 4: CONNECTING WITH THE CUSTOMER

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THE BUYER'S JOURNEY INTRODUCTION

After looking at the number of marketing channels available to you, how do you construct a plan utilizing the SMART goals methodology? And, how do you conduct research? Now it's time to examine the buyer's journey. The buyer's journey is the process a consumer goes through before purchasing a product or service. This process can look different, depending on the industry or product you are associated with but generally has five main stages from awareness to retention and is commonly visualized as a funnel.

When you target an audience, you have to consider where in the buyer's journey this audience sits. Do they already know your product? Have they tried it before? Have they ever purchased from your competitors' brand? What do they think about your brand and product? What are the pain points that would prevent this audience from purchasing your brand? Understanding the context around your audience and the elements needed to move them down the funnel are critical for a successful digital marketing strategy. Their place in the buyer's journey will influence the media you choose to communicate with them. The idea is to uncover insights and use them in your digital marketing strategy to move your audience through the stages of the funnel. You should aim to create your own buyer's journey based on research, adding precision to the general model we are going to see in the next few slides. This is deeply rooted in the in-bound methodology. In other words, how to attract a highly qualified audience by providing the necessary tools for their decision-making process. Now, let's take a look at the different stages in the buyer's journey.

THE BUYER'S JOURNEY

To simplify the decision-making process that all consumers go through, we can reduce it down to three main consumer touchpoints:

Awareness: Being aware of your company

Consideration: Researching how your company fits in their life

Conversion: Making a purchase decision, or taking action

Each stage comes with its own challenges and goals that will drive a marketing strategy. We can develop this three-stage journey a little further into a five-stage funnel for even more precise consumer targeting.

Awareness: To communicate a benefit, and tell them about a brand, product, event, or offer

Interest: To increase emotional engagement

Consideration: To bring your company to the forefront of the choice

Conversion: To convert intent into action

Retention: To make the consumer feels special and increase the chances of recommendations

1. Awareness: The Awareness stage represents the moment when the consumer becomes aware of a problem they want to solve in their life and perceives your product ad as a potential solution. In this stage, marketers should focus on creating visibility and recognition. This is a critical stage for new

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products, brands, or added benefits to an existing product. This stage will focus on getting your product out there, implementing it as part of a broader scope of existing solutions for an issue.

2. Interest: The Interest stage represents the moment when the consumer is looking for options that will help solve their problem. At this stage, the consumer has a selection of ideas in mind but will need more information and experience to make a decision. This is a quest for knowledge that, in the digital marketing landscape, translates into reading reviews, blog articles, social media, and ad product websites in order to gain as much information as possible.

3. Consideration: The Consideration stage represents the moment when the consumer knows about your brand and thinks it might be a good fit for their needs or what they are trying to achieve. They may have other brands in mind, but your company is in the mix. At this stage, inbound strategies are highly effective because, if correctly used, they ensure that the brand or product more frequently appears in the consumer's search results and social media feeds.

4. Conversion: The Conversion stage represents the moment when the consumer is ready to buy your product or take action on your site. The consumer has done their research and, based on their needs and motivations, has decided on a product as the best solution for their problem. At this stage, the consumer has not yet paid for the product or service, and the role of the marketer is to create a point of contact to drive the conversions. This is generally achieved with targeting and re-targeting, promotional offers, and creating a sense of urgency.

5. Retention: The Retention stage is often overlooked, but it is a key stage for ensuring reoccurring revenue and creating a group of active brand advocates. Once the consumer has used the product and is satisfied, it is crucial to provide added value and create a real relationship. In this stage, you are addressing an already convinced consumer who thinks your product is great for them, but you still need to keep them satisfied and create a desire to come back to your product. The more you know about your customers, the more you will be able to provide additional value to them and delight them, not only with your product, but with your brand experience and personality.

INTEGRATING TRADITIONAL AND DIGITAL MARKETING

Traditional and digital marketing both have unique strengths that can be used throughout the buyer's journey to achieve your broader marketing goals. By thinking this way, you can understand the importance of aligning with other marketing departments beyond the digital marketing team.

Working in collaboration is key to moving your potential customers through the funnel and converting. Using a full circle of marketing tactics is called a 360, or integrated marketing strategy. As it aims to engage consumers at all touchpoints throughout their day. The mainstream definition of a 360 marketing strategy is that it is marketing plan that is both online and offline, across all digital channels on social media, and anywhere that your customer spends time.

It's a wholistic promotion that truly covers all touchpoints. In short, to be truly 360, a campaign would need to include everything that is used by your consumer. Mobile, digital search, and social, as well as any relevant traditional channels like TV, radio, or print.

If your audience is digital native, you may not have an offline or traditional media element. But if you do, let's take a look at the benefits of a 360 marketing campaign that implements both traditional and digital marketing. We have briefly touched on a few advantages of a 360 marketing campaign already but let's lists some precise benefits of an integrated 360 marketing campaign.

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First of all, it covers the entire buying cycle. Each media channel, offline or online, is good at achieving specific marketing objectives. When channels are used together, they can cover the full spectrum of the consumer's journey to help efficiently move them through the funnel towards purchase, conversion, and retention.

An integrated 360 campaign taps into each audience's point of contact with your brand. In today's media landscape, your audience is not attached to one particular type of media. They will travel across digital, television, print, and other media. Being present across the most impactful and important touchpoints allows your brand to resonate and move with your potential customers as they go through their day.

Integrated marketing campaigns allow you to adapt to media consumption changes such as seasonality and daily trends. An integrated 360 campaign optimizes for scale and relevance. Traditional media types are good for scaling as they reach a large number of people in a short amount of time.

Just be aware of the cost and time it takes to create and produce ads and assets to run on traditional channels. Digital media channels are good for relevance and attracting specific consumers with lower cost for production and shorter lead times to create the assets. A 360 campaign can help attract the ideal consumers who are most likely to convert while helping your brand get discovered by potential new customer prospects.

360 marketing campaigns provide a complete marketing experience to the audience. For the audience, having a full-brand experience is a bonus. If they have already experienced the brand online, they might want to experience it offline, through the store experience or see the brand in the street or on TV when they don't expect it.

That, for brands, is a great cyclical process. It creates familiarity with the audience and aids recall. We should also consider the notion of dual-screening. This is where marketers target an audience while they consume traditional mass media like TV while receiving targeted messages online. As is the case with trending Twitter hashtags during live TV or breaking news events.

Finally, an integrated 360 campaign enables you to measure results effectively. Traditional media choices are hard to report on, in terms of ROI. Therefore, using digital strategies can help shed some light on how the audience actually interacts with and reacts to the campaign.

And can also help measure the impact of traditional media. For instance, if a brand runs an ad on TV at 8 p.m., and the corresponding website analytics report an upward trend at that time, we can draw some conclusions on the effectiveness of the ad based on the actions taken online.

The difference between normal online activity and a traffic or sales spike around the time of a TV ad is a good measure of the impact of the TV ad.

ALIGNING THE BUYER'S JOURNEY WITH CHANNELS

Digital marketing has a set of primary components or channels that are used to achieve the marketing goals set for each function. These will overlap because multiple components can be used for different functions. Working in collaboration is key to moving your leads through the funnel and converting. Using the full circle of marketing tactics is known as a 360 or integrated marketing strategy. The common definition of a 360 marketing strategy is that it is a marketing plan that is both online and offline, on social media, and more. It's a holistic promotion that truly covers all the bases.

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Content: Based on the inbound methodology, content is king. It is your content that attracts interested consumers and encourages them to find out, learn, and research about your product and brand. Content marketing is the number one priority in your inbound strategy as it will be at the center of all efforts and campaigns as the added value to build trust with the consumer, and eventually convert them into customers.

Display and Video Advertising: Based on an outbound strategy, marketers and brands can drive awareness and consideration by using engaging banner and audio visual formats displayed to audiences who fit a certain profile on channels across the web. This can be done by targeting interest groups, programmatically or using retargeting methods to ensure you are targeting the ideal audiences at all times. Goals and KPIs for video and display tend to be awareness-driving outcomes rather than direct conversions through the channel.

Social Media Marketing: Through content distribution and social engagement, social media marketing enables you to create a real connection with consumers, keep them informed, and make it easy for them to reach your website, ask for information, and provide feedback. Social media allows you to showcase your brand's personality and connections with other companies, influencers, and causes, making your company more relatable.

Paid Search: This channel is directly tied to conversion and sales. Because consumers turn to their search engine to find answers, being top of search engine results pages (SERPs) is a competitive advantage. Knowing that consumers online will click on the top links presented and rarely look past the first page, it is essential to be visible when consumers search and are ready to buy.

Search Engine Optimization: SEO is most useful for discovery and researching activities on search engines. Good SEO means your content will be considered more relevant by search engine and will hopefully list your website closer to the top of the page in the organic, non-paid search results.

Email Marketing: The consumer doesn't always proactively come on your website or find you on Google. However, email marketing is the channel that allows you to reach out to subscribed consumers who want to hear from you.

Automation: By using specialist software, digital marketers can set up campaigns to automatically engage prospects and customers at key times using email marketing and social media channels. You can set up a workflow which is a number of rules for sending emails or delivering social content to different people on your prospect or customer list to keep them engaged with your brand as they come to a purchase decision. This is called lead or prospect nurturing, and it can have a very positive impact on consumer purchase patterns.

Analytics: This enables you to connect each campaign, visits, and conversions, and tie it all together to understand the consumer journey through your marketing channels and sales funnel. Different campaign analytics tools are incorporated in the various social media platforms, search engines and email service providers. You can also track website visitors using web analytics to understand what happens after a user clicks on your campaign ad and land on your site. Both campaign and website analytics are essential for optimization of channels by providing marketers with the data to make informed decisions.

The Awareness and Interest stages are driven by discovery when the consumer slowly becomes aware of their problem and the potential solutions. This stage is driven by your content's relationship with the main topic. A user may not carry out a detailed search, meaning that positioning on a broad topic and sharing content that stands out (video or advertising) will help your product become part of

the conversation. The ideal situation is for your content to be engaging and interesting, bring added value to the conversation, and provide solutions to the consumer's problem. Developing a strong social media presence and engagement is recommended for bringing your product forward organically and on your target timeline.

Consideration and Conversion are stages where the consumer is more focused. At these stages, the customers know the available solutions and are now wondering which one to choose by looking for additional information, experience, reviews, and creating a mindmap of the best quality/price/value ratio. As consumers will likely search for additional information by asking precise questions about the product, you need to optimize your content for search engines and invest in paid ads on keywords translation to ensure the 'Consideration' stage is well-integrated in your strategy. The more your product or brand is associated with a specific topic and keyword, the stronger the association will be shaped in the consumer's mind. This can increase content discovery and engagement significantly.

Retention uses more personal components, such as email marketing automation and analytics, to provide a consistent customer experience, reaching out, following up a purchase, and using the correct information to create a sense of intimacy between the customer and the brand. Using information such a birthday date, membership start date, or favorite topic or product can produce engaging content that triggers an emotional response from the customer.

TOOLS FOR DIGITAL MARKETING

Your digital marketing strategy will be defined by the channels you will be using. The channels shown here also coincide with the modules you will explore in this program. The main digital channels are all covered in the course and include email marketing, paid search, website optimization, SEO, display advertising, content marketing, strategy, analytics, and social media marketing.

Let's start with website optimization. Website optimization is the art of creating and continuously improving websites to optimize the visitor experience, resulting in higher visitor satisfaction, better user experience, and high repeat visit and conversion rates.

Having a useful and functional website is key because if your website is not optimized, it will result in a customer having a bad experience, or finding it difficult to purchase from you. As such, web optimization is about designing your website so the customer flows through your content and goes from your blog, to your product page, to your e-commerce, and eventually makes a purchase.

Crucially, it is very important that the website is optimized to facilitate shopping on different devices. People now browse across different devices, which can lead to them searching for a product on their mobile phone to check some information, for example. And then, later, finalizing the purchase on a desktop computer. Therefore, you want to make sure that the experience on mobile is as good as the experience on desktop.

Next up, let's look at social media marketing. This is a form of outbound digital marketing that most people are very familiar with as it utilizes social networking platforms to increase brand or product exposure, and cultivate relationships with consumers. Social media marketing is about creating visibility and interactivity with your audience.

This is one of the most if not the most important channels you use to speak to your audience in an outbound manner. When your audience engages, it can change the dynamic to inbound. They can message you back, seek out, and actively share your content, repost, like, comment, and ask questions.

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Moving your communications on social media from an outbound media platform where you push out your posts to an audience to a two-way outbound-inbound conversational channel is the ultimate goal for digital marketers. Display and video advertising are outbound awareness generating digital channels that combine the science and precision of online audience targeting with the emotional engagement of audio, video, and creative visual formats.

It generates engagement, brand affinity, recall, and traffic from a highly targeted audience. There are numerous ad formats and techniques to engage your target audience on channels like YouTube, websites across the internet, and social networks, all of which will be discussed in detail during this module.

Let's take a look at some inbound channels now. To begin, we have paid search, or PPC, as it is also known. PPC is an inbound method of advertising on Google, Yahoo, Bing, or other search engines and paying only when the searcher clicks your ad. Paid search is key to being discovered when people are actively looking for products or solutions.

Essentially, when a consumer becomes aware of your product through display or social, for example, they're driven to take action when the time is right for them. The value of paid search is in user intent. That is, the searcher is looking for a product and is likely to take action when they find it.

And there is real competition for this type of traffic. Using paid search is a good way for you to be on top of the search results page quickly and easily for the types of searches you want to be associated with. Alongside paid search, digital marketers can use SEO or search engine optimization techniques.

This is the process of driving inbound traffic from the free, organic, or natural search results on search engines. These are the search results below the PPC result on local search, on Google Maps, or the dynamic results like expandable drop downs that appear on Google when someone searches.

SEO is about making your website as attractive as possible to search engines like Google. The search engine will then match the websites, which offer the most accurate solution to a user's search query. In the best digital marketing strategies, SEO works in tandem with paid search, to provide multiple ways for searchers to access your content and buy your products online.

Content marketing is an effective inbound method that involves the creation, publishing, and sharing of content with the aim of building brand reputation, awareness, and affinity. You must develop a strong content strategy to increase your brand personality and likability. Nowadays, you can't just be a product.

You need to be a brand that has values and takes part in everyday life. A brand that shares about everyday events in areas near where your consumer lives. Or a brand that shares articles about a great new artist that they want to promote. You need to be more than just a product. You need to interest people because what you do is what you believe in and you share the same values.

Building an effective brand personality is the true value of content marketing. Next, we have email marketing. Email marketing is a subscribed inbound channel used to deliver advertisements, offers, education, and other marketing content directly to an interested user’s email inbox.

Based on the type of content in your email broadcast, you can drive efficient inbound traffic and conversions from your subscribed audience. An email marketing campaign is a real opportunity to

get your content, news, or information into the hand of your customer. And the content therein should make them want to click on any relevant links, go to your website, and take action.

Web analytics is the collection, measurement, analysis, and reporting of web data for purposes of understanding and optimizing web usage. This is where we use data to understand our website visitors and the channels they use to engage with our content and convert or buy on our site.

It also helps us understand who they are. For example, their location, languages spoken, devices used, mobile, desktop or tablet, if they've been on the site before. And numerous other data points that we can use to report on the success of our digital marketing activity and improve future performance.

And, finally, digital strategy is the establishment of a set of practices and goals that guide your long-term digital objectives and operate across all digital channels that your customer utilizes. The strategy piece draws together everything you know about your audience, available channel options, budget and timings to create a plan that uses digital media to deliver on a business objective.

The digital strategy is the roadmap to success for any digital marketer. It will act as a guide to efficiently execute the various actions required to target your audience. And, ultimately, deliver on your goal within budget and timeframe. These nine channels and modules will be discussed in much greater detail throughout the duration of this program.

Upon completion, you will have a thorough understanding of how best to utilize them throughout the various digital marketing strategies you will devise for your business.

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LESSON 5: PROJECT MANAGEMENT

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INTRODUCTION TO PROJECT MANAGEMENT

Project managers play a crucial role in digital marketing. They help to ensure that campaigns:

- Meet the brief with high quality output
- Are delivered and deployed on time
- Are delivered within the agreed budget

A wide range of project management frameworks and methodologies are available. These include PRINCE2, Scrum, Lean, Critical Chain Project Management, and more. Here, however, we'll take a broad look at the value that project management and project managers bring to marketing campaigns.

So, to begin, what exactly is a project?

Any initiative your team undertakes that has a defined deliverable and delivery date can be classed as a project. And any project can benefit from the efficiency and clarity that project management will bring.

Planning is a key starting point for any project. Unfortunately, project management can easily be overlooked when planning resources for a campaign. Unless it's already baked into a company's culture, it can seem unnecessary, especially for smaller projects. And for agencies it can be even harder to justify, as clients don't like paying for resource that doesn't seem to be crucial to getting the campaign delivered.

With that in mind, what benefits can project management by a dedicated project manager bring to a project? The benefits include:

- Fluid communication between stakeholders, marketers, clients, external suppliers, and so on
- On-hand status updates on where the project is at any time
- Resource planning, ahead of when it is needed rather than being called for reactively
- An accountable, central point of contact to manage the web of interdependencies in a project
- Client assurance and confidence
- Predictable deadlines

ROLE OF THE PROJECT MANAGER

But what exactly does a project manager do? What are their day-to-day responsibilities? And what skills does a project manager need to have or develop?

Well, a project manager's role involves carrying out a number of tasks.

First, they guide projects from start to finish. This involves determining scope, assigning tasks, and setting deadlines. Indeed, it includes everything involved in setting up projects for execution.

Project managers also ensure that everyone has what they need to get their work done. And if people don't have what they need, it's the project manager's job to figure out what's required to get them what they need and remove any obstacles.

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Project managers facilitate communication between stakeholders and team members. They get stakeholder buy-in at the start of the project, and update stakeholders as the project progresses. Also, they make sure everyone has all the information they need, and ensure team members are communicating clearly with one another. This can even mean implementing systems such as Slack, Trello, Asana, and so on to ensure communication is fluid.

The communication skills that project managers need often rely on natural abilities rather than learned knowledge. However, simply understanding what these skills are can enable project managers to carry out their role to the best of their abilities.

As well as facilitating communication between others, project managers need to be able to communicate effectively themselves with all involved. This is where excellent interpersonal skills come into play. If you're leading a project, you'll need to be able to communicate with everyone involved, both verbally and in writing. Of course, good communication is something that should come naturally to many marketers anyway. As a project manager, however, you need to constantly monitor your communication skills and think about how you can communicate most effectively.

Remember that it's not all about shop talk! You're a pivotal team player and it's important that people like and respect you. On the one hand, you must be firm on your deadlines and deal assertively with people who are not performing as expected. But, on the other hand, take time to make small talk, and get to know the people around you. Use emotional intelligence to understand how people are feeling. And make sure that people feel comfortable approaching you with any questions or issues. Motivate your team and try to ensure that they are happy to work with you.

Unfortunately, wherever there is a project, there's likely to be some conflict along the way. All the planning in the world cannot prevent the unexpected. And when the unexpected happens, people get agitated. As a project manager, your goal is to manage conflict when it arises. And this is where you'll need excellent negotiating skills.

You'll face immovable problems, no-win arguments, and catch-22 situations. Suppose your project is likely to miss a key deadline. You might have to become the arbiter between a designer who doesn't want to stay late and an account manager who doesn't want to jeopardize their carefully nurtured client relationship. While you must always have one eye on the agreed project deliverables, you also need to be creative with compromise. Being able to offer people concessions in other ways to get what you need is crucial.

Be realistic. In any project team, you're not going to be able to get everyone to agree on everything all the time. Disagreements and conflicts are inevitable. So, when conflicts do arise, it'll be your job to resolve them in order to keep the project moving forward. You have to become the leader when everyone else is squabbling. Set an example, by being fair but decisive. Never point fingers or get personal. Always keep it about what the project needs, and what's best for the project.

With projects come deadlines! So knowing how to manage your time, and your team members' time, is a crucial skill. Everyone on the project will need to know how to manage their time effectively! Of course, it can become tricky when you have to raise time management issues with a team member. It's not easy to do it without making people feel judged. Always address the time management issue without attacking the person.

The best approach is to lead by example and have your own time management tools and techniques in plain view. One useful technique is the Pomodoro method. This is a time management system that encourages people to work effectively with the time they have. Using this method, you break your

workday into 25-minute chunks separated by 5-minute breaks. These intervals are referred to as pomodoros. Using timers can ensure that you work in bursts of 'deep work'. And remember to start the day with a clear set of objectives to plan those bursts.

It might sound obvious, but project managers need to have excellent leadership skills. After all, they are responsible for leading the project! If you didn't consider yourself a leader before, it's time to change that. Even if you're not a team lead, there will be times where you need to spearhead a project and inspire others into action.

Basic leadership skills include:

- The ability to listen to others, and take on board their concerns, without seeming rushed or distracted by technology.
- Decisiveness –to choose the best course of action, explain in clear and concise terms why that is optimal, and then move ahead.
- Honesty – the ability to be honest with yourself and others about failures as well as successes
- Confidence in your best abilities inspires others to trust your judgment and decisions. When a project manager exudes uncertainty and hesitation, this undermines the morale of the whole team.
- Communication skills – this means being able to calmly talk in a concise and authoritative manner about project management.

When you're leading a project, you need to understand what the project is about! This involves developing subject matter expertise. If you're a marketer looking to build project management skills, you already have deep subject matter expertise both in marketing and perhaps your specific industry. But, if you're a project manager by trade working with marketing teams, then you'll need to brush up on your marketing skills.

Marketing and creative specialists won't respond well to someone running their projects who doesn't have a basic understanding of the discipline. This can lead to difficulty fostering the respect and leadership previously mentioned. Even if you're not an expert, show a willingness to learn. The more you show respect for the project, the more team members will respect you as a project manager.

These skills can all be regarded as the 'soft skills' needed to be a project manager. But what about the day-to-day work? What practical competencies do you need in order to be an effective project manager in marketing?

Here are some competencies that you should develop.

The first is the ability to allocate resources. No project has unlimited resources, so it's your job to optimally allocate the resources you have. Any project will be subject to constraints on time, budget, or people to carry out the work. So learn to work with what you've got. Make the most of what you have within your team and find out how to source external specialists through agencies or your own research and recruitment.

You must be able to manage tasks, of course. Help your team members develop efficient workflows. And make sure they understand what needs to be done at each step in the project.

Time management is crucial, so you need to be able to plan timelines. On any given project, you'll likely have multiple people working on different pieces of the bigger picture. Before work starts, you need to be able to give everyone their own timelines for delivery, and manage the often-complicated

web of interdependencies. For example, the web developers might need approved designs for a website before they can start building it.

As well as planning timelines, you need to be able to set realistic deadlines. Your deadlines should stretch the team without breaking them. If the deadlines are too generous, complacency can creep into the team. But if the deadlines are too aggressive, this can lead to stress and burnout.

As well as simply setting deadlines, an experienced project manager will add in contingency time. Giving time buffers ahead of crucial delivery dates allows for the unexpected happening. And let's face it, the unexpected usually does happen! Having buffer time will significantly raise your chances of shipping your project on time!

Finally, you need to be proficient in using project management tools. Indeed, much of your day as a project manager will be spent working with software that aids your efforts. These tools act as a central information repository for all the tasks, people, assets, deadlines, and so on. Today, most of these tools are online and offer all team members their own accounts with varying levels of access. Keeping this software updated and comprehensive, in terms of having as much project information in there as possible, can provide an invaluable 'single source of truth'. It shows progress and reassures stakeholders that the project is well managed. Examples of such tools include Asana, Trello, and Jira.

SEVEN-STEP FRAMEWORK FOR MANAGING PROJECTS

Let's look at the lifecycle of a typical project in marketing. Here is a simple seven-step framework for managing projects. You can use this even if you're not a project manager and have never been called on to manage projects before.

The **first step** is to identify the project or campaign.

This is the very beginning of the process. You've likely conducted some sort of brainstorming process or otherwise determined loosely what the given project will be.

Whatever it is you're working on, you need to make sure you're crystal-clear on its purpose. Why are you doing the project? And be clear on the intended outcomes. What exactly are you delivering?

Step 2 is to write a project brief.

Next, it's time to buckle down and write a project brief. This is also known as a creative brief, but they're essentially the same thing. This is a simple outline of everything the project will entail, including:

- A project summary – This is one or two sentences describing the project at a high level.
- Some basic details –Who is the project for? Who is your audience? What problems will it solve? How will it be measured and how soon do you expect to see results?
- The goal – What is the desired aim for the project? It's helpful if you can nail down some hard numbers, but that can be determined later if necessary.
- A process outline – This describes the process that'll be implemented to execute the project. A high-level summary of steps and handoffs between team members is sufficient for now.
- The people involved – Which team members need to be on the project? Be careful only to include necessary staff in order to make the best use of everyone's time.

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- Required resources – Which tools and other assets will be needed to complete the project? These would include brand assets, logos, fonts, content files, software, and so on.
- Deliverables – What tangible assets will be created as a result of this project? These would include websites, videos, infographics, blog posts, social posts, and so on.
- A rough timeline – When would you like the project to actually ship?

The actual form this document takes doesn't need to be overly complex. Indeed, there's no right or wrong way to lay it out. Generally, a text document or slide deck is all you need. Just make sure that it's easy to read! Put it in front of everyone on the project and keep it somewhere universally accessible. It will be a useful guiding light throughout the project.

The **third step** is to develop goals and objectives.

A project should always have a goal. If goals and objectives are not laid out very specifically and clearly, you run the risk of doing lots of activity, but for no defined result for the business. You're just busy being busy!

It helps to have a repeatable process in place for setting goals too. Try following the SMART goals framework:

- Specific – The goal is tied to a specific number or well-defined objective.
- Measurable – Progress toward the goal can be quantified with data.
- Actionable – It can be done by you and your team, and is realistic.
- Relevant – The goal fits with your wider company objectives and initiatives.
- Time-bound – It'll be attained within a set period of time.

Every goal you set should meet these criteria.

Step 4 is to get input from the team.

Prior to meeting the team, gather information on people's overall availability and requirements. Then start mapping out how much time everyone needs and begin to put together loose timelines.

Next, list all the deliverables the team will need to produce for this project. This means all the tangible assets that will be created, such as blog posts, landing pages, videos, social content, emails, and so on.

Then, list which teams will need to be involved in the project. This means identifying which specific marketing teams in your company, plus other departments – such as web development or accounting – need to be involved.

Finally, describe the goal of the project. Keep it as concise as possible, but do include specific statistics and numbers you'd like to achieve, if possible.

Schedule a date for a team meeting, and send a calendar invite letting everyone know about the meeting. Once you kick off this meeting, run through the following:

- Give a basic explanation of the project. Share your creative brief with everyone too.
- Ask what steps each team member will need to take, especially if you aren't sure.
- Find out how much time they'll need for each phase of the project, with likely contingency.

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Then, you can complete a rough timeline as the meeting progresses, and leave with a good idea of what everyone will need to make what you're working on a success.

By the time you've talked the team through the project and gathered their answers and feedback, you'll have the raw information you need from the team to actually start mapping out the project in your project management tool of choice.

This then brings us to the **fifth step**: map out timelines and tasks.

So now it's time to get granular in planning out the individual tasks that will need to be completed throughout the project. Ideally, your team members will be able to tell you which tasks they'll need to tackle. All you need to worry about are the deadlines for each team member's phase in the project.

In your project management tool, start creating entries for each task and phase, with associated deadlines.

Sometimes, tasks need to be approved by another team member or manager, maybe even yourself. Ensure this is logged too, as approvals can hold things up if someone is away or too busy to review work.

By the time you're done, you'll have all your deadlines for each phase, and all of the tasks everyone needs to complete all planned out in one place.

Step 6 is to start the project.

Kick off your project and keep communication flowing as you do so. It will be your job to ensure that everything is happening when it should, and to come up with solutions when deadlines get missed and a knock-on effect is created. Monitor the project carefully and constantly.

You'll also be expected to be the go-to source of information for anyone wanting to get an update on the project. Ensure that you have a ready-to-hand overview or dashboard.

Remember, no project has ever gone perfectly! It is how you deal with things going wrong that defines you as a project manager. Indeed, this defines any manager. Be prepared to shift the moving parts of your plan as it progresses, to accommodate those unexpected bumps in the road.

Not surprisingly, the **final step** is to finish the project.

Once the project is completed, it's your job to check that all the deliverables have in fact been shipped. And you need to ensure that all requirements of the original brief have been satisfied – unless they changed along with way, of course. Ask yourself: has the project been completed on time, on budget, and to the required standard?

A vitally important step at this stage is to review the project. You'll need to do this from a range of perspectives. Was it successful for the business? Did it have a positive return on investment? In the case of an agency, was it profitable? Was it as successful as originally planned in the brief? Did the team enjoy working on it, and doing so through the processes you laid out? Did the tools, software, and techniques you used to manage the project work for everybody involved?

A good way to gather this kind of feedback is with a 'post-mortem' meeting with the project team. This attempts to answer these and other questions, and gain insights that you can use to improve future projects.

LESSON 6: MANAGING YOUR TIME EFFECTIVELY

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INTRODUCTION TO TIME MANAGEMENT

We all have the same amount of time each day. But how we use those twenty-four hours is up to us! Using your time to best effect takes a bit of planning - and you need to be realistic about your own personal abilities and capabilities.

Your time-management ability with your peers, and with internal and external customers, will have a direct impact on people's opinion about your credibility. Why is this? Well, for example, if you say 'yes' to everything, then people will initially like you for your 'can-do attitude' and willingness to assist. But what if you actually can't do everything that you promise? Over time, people will come to the conclusion that you can do nothing effectively at all, as you are always overwhelmed.

The first and most important thing to remember about effective time management is that you have to defend your time. Otherwise, others will waste it for you!

To ensure you can use your time effectively, you should be realistic about a number of things before you commit to completing any task. First of all, think about what you can and cannot achieve within a normal day. And also consider your own skills and knowledge. Are they sufficient for you to complete the tasks?

What is your personal commitment to the timeframe? Don't forget to include the time required for planning, resourcing, completion, and review. And remember to take into account your own need to commute, eat, sleep, and have family time.

When thinking about the time needed to complete a task, you also need to consider the other people on your team. Are they equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge? Will they work faster or slower than you? Do you have to check their work? Do they have to check your work?

And consider the wider work environment. Think about the hidden agendas in the workplace. What's high priority to you might be low priority to others!

One of the biggest time management challenges you face is effectively dealing with people who make requests on your time. You can use a few useful guidelines to help you respond to these requests. First of all, don't apologize for saying 'no'. And face-to-face, always use a slow, calm voice when replying to people. If you're replying via email, use as few words as possible.

Before you reply, make sure you understand what you're being asked. Listen, paraphrase, and empathize with any request. Get to the root of the perceived problem as soon as possible.

However you decide to respond, always explain yourself clearly and simply. Repeat your answer several times if necessary, using the same language. And use depersonalized language like 'The situation is...' rather than 'I think...' Avoid turning the situation into a potential personal conflict.

Remember, even if you've already said 'yes', you can change your mind and then say 'no' if your situation changes.

When it comes to time management, people often say "I don't have the time" or "I can't find the time." Now, you could argue that people need to 'make the time' for important tasks. However, you have to do more than that. You should instead re-imagine the task in question, and ask yourself, "How important is it for me to complete this task?"

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This is where priorities come into play. You may find that you cannot make the time to complete a work task, but you can find the time to go online and spend time checking out hotels and flights for your next vacation. What this shows is that you are not prioritizing the available time in your life. If you need the time, you will find the time. But, to do this, you need to prioritize the task that you need to complete.

BENEFITS OF EFFECTIVE TIME MANAGEMENT

You probably instinctively know that it makes sense to manage your time. But what are the actual benefits of effective time management?

Well, think about it. How do you feel when you think you don't have enough time? Stressed out, or even panicked! But knowing what has to be done, when, and by whom, allows you to experience calmness. You feel in control of your time and your tasks. In addition, you open yourself up to new ideas and challenges in work.

When you're in control of your time, you're better able to defend your time against those who would knowingly waste if for you. In fact, you begin to get a reputation as the person who gets stuff done. People admire how you manage your time and succeed with your tasks. This, in turn, means you are better positioned to seek promotion.

This positive reputation has other benefits too. For example, peers like to work with you, because you are successful in the workplace.

And think about the personal benefits. Because you are calmer, you sleep better and are easier to be around. You have high energy, and your personal and workplace relationships improve.

With good time management, you get more done in less time. This, in turn, gives you more free time, and helps you focus on what is important, and not just on what seems to be urgent. You can then put your freed-up time to good use, such as further training and learning, or other steps to develop your career. All these benefits also improve your overall well-being.

PRIORITIZING TASKS AND SETTING GOALS

Managing time effectively involves prioritizing tasks and setting goals. In order to do this, you first need to be able to distinguish between what is important and what is urgent.

Dwight D. Eisenhower, the former general and president of the United States, devised the 'Eisenhower Decision Matrix'. It was later refined and popularized by Stephen Covey in his book The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People.

Eisenhower said, "What is important is seldom urgent and what is urgent is seldom important."

We react to 'urgent' tasks and 'important' tasks in different ways. We face urgent tasks in a reactive mode. This mode tends to make us negative, hurried, and most of all defensive. If something is urgent, we feel we need to do it now.

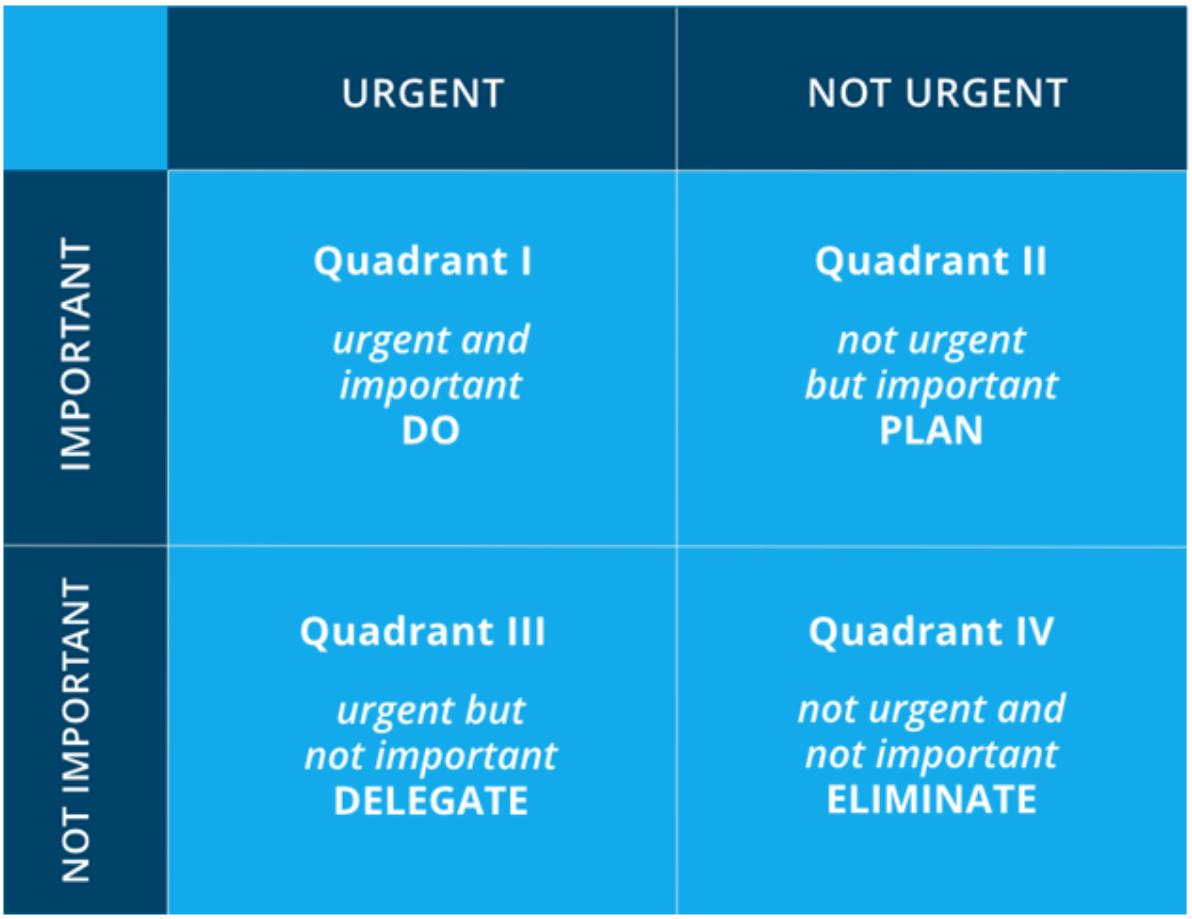
We face important tasks, on the other hand, in a responsive mode. This mode makes us rational, composed, and open to new opportunities. Our important tasks are what contribute to our long-term values, goals, and mission.

There is a difference between what is urgent and what is important. However, most people fall into the trap of believing that all urgent activities are also important.

In our modern ‘always-on’ world, we can get overwhelmed by the sense that everything is urgent and must be done immediately. As the media theorist Douglas Rushkoff claims, we are currently experiencing 'present shock'. In other words, “we live in a continuous, always-on ‘now’” and lose our sense of long-term narrative and direction.

This causes us to fall into silos of stress, fatigue, and breakdown. Over time, we are unable to accurately see and assess our priorities.

Covey refined Eisenhower’s Decision Matrix into four quadrants.



Quadrant 1 consists of tasks that are urgent and important. These include crises, deadlines, and urgent problems.

Quadrant 2 consists of tasks that are important, but not urgent. These include relationships, planning, and recreation.

In Quadrant 3, we find tasks that are urgent, but not important. These might include interruptions and meetings, and simple but urgent activities.

And finally, Quadrant 4 consists of tasks that are neither urgent nor important. These include time wasters, pleasant activities, and trivia.

As you can imagine, you should be focusing on Quadrant 1, the realm of urgent and important tasks. These tasks require our immediate attention and go towards our long-term goals.

Let's dive into each quadrant a bit more. Examples of items in Quadrant 1 include feeling obliged to respond within 24 hours to an email received or tasks not completed due to issues outside your control. Paying your rent or mortgage if you have missed the payment date would be a Quadrant 1 task.

With careful planning, you can reduce the sense of urgency. For example, you could work on your Annual Report for a short maximum time period every day, instead of leaving it until the week before publication to begin. This helps you move some Quadrant 1 tasks into Quadrant 2.

According to Covey, the ideal is to be able to spend most of your time on important tasks without that stressful sense of urgency. This is Quadrant 2. These are tasks without a deadline that help you achieve your goals. These tasks center around relationship building (in work and at home), planning for the future (medium to long term), and personal recreation (such as hobbies or studying). To operate effectively in Quadrant 2, you need to accept that there is never a 'right time' to do something. You can't wait around for the 'right time', you must live and plan your life to succeed.

Next is Quadrant 3, where we find tasks that are urgent, but not important. These are the tasks that do require action now, but that are not actually critical to the achievement of our goals. Often, tasks end up in your Quadrant 3 because of the actions of others. They are prioritizing their work over yours.

Examples of Quadrant 3 tasks include making and taking phone calls, responding to social media, and dealing with colleagues approaching your desk. Emails can also fall into this quadrant, if you find it hard to distinguish between the urgent and the important.

According to Covey, people spend most of their time focused on Quadrant 3 tasks, while thinking they are actually working in Quadrant 1. In other words, they are working on tasks that are not really as important as they think they are.

In Quadrant 3, while you may be responding the needs of others, you feel good about your involvement in these tasks. But this does not mean that you are getting stuff done. You may be feeling good marking items off your list, but you also realize that you are not making any progress in your own long-term goals. Quadrant 3 can be personally frustrating.

Finally, we come to Quadrant 4, where we find tasks that are neither urgent nor important. These tasks do not help you achieve your short- or long-term goals. Example include surfing the web or browsing TV and social media. Obviously, your professional career and work-life-balance would suffer if you spent all of your time, energy, and focus in Quadrant 4. However, this quadrant is of some value, as it allows you work on tasks that help you relax and decompress.

So how does all this talk of quadrants help you more effectively manage your time? You need to understand the distinction between urgency and importance. Start to objectively filter and prioritize what is important over what is merely urgent. Deciding which tasks are actioned in which quadrant requires constant vigilance, discipline, and honesty.

Consider this example. Every month you have a system in place to pay a major bill, such as your rent or mortgage. Then this becomes a Quadrant 2 task, because it is important, but not urgent. You've put in place a plan whereby your salary is paid into your bank account, and from there the lender draws down an agreed amount at the same time each month.

What happens if this system fails because you did not have enough funds in your account to cover the payment? Then this important task suddenly becomes urgent too! If urgent and immediate action is not taken, there may be extreme consequences. It is much better to plan to have a systemized payment in place within Quadrant 2.

Once you have filtered and prioritized your tasks, you can set goals to help you achieve them. Regardless of where you work, goals give you direction and purpose to steer your daily activities to success.

Here's another example. Suppose you decide you are going to drive to Martina's house. But you don't know where Martina lives. Your plan is to drive around until you recognize her house. This sounds like a workable strategy. However, it could take decades to find Martina's house, and even then you would have to be very, very lucky to find it.

Believe it or not, this style of thinking is commonly found in many companies. Although they might not leave success at the mercy of pure chance, many companies have a similar lack of clarity about their destination and how long it will take to get there.

Consider this statement: "We're going to be the biggest provider of widgets in Europe." That's a worthy goal, of course. But what do you actually have to do to become the biggest? Like driving to Martina's house, such statements of intent are going to be impossible to achieve unless an appropriate roadmap is created.

To help you achieve your goals, follow these best practices. First, write down your goals. Talking them out won't work. By using pen and paper, rather than an electronic device, it takes longer – and this is a good thing, as the slower pace allows you to clearly visualize your goals and lodge them in your subconscious mind as the first step.

Second, dig into each goal, and list and specify the details. This includes the when, who, how many, cost, colors, and so on. The more specific you can be, the more information your mind has to work with to achieve your goals.

Third, tick off the individual specifics as you achieve them. This will give you a more accurate picture of your journey to date, and of what comes next.

Fourth, make sure your goals are realistic. Can you really do this? Do you need assistance? What will it cost? How long will it take? Imagine that your goal is to become a millionaire within a year. That's great! But if you currently earn 50,000 dollars per year, your goal isn't realistic, is it?

And finally, begin with the end in mind. Start with your destination, and work backwards from there to define the steps of your roadmap.

SAVING AND CREATING TIME

What strategies can you use to save - and thereby create extra - time?

One useful strategy is to set time limits and use the Pareto Principle. This was named after the Italian economist Vilfredo Pareto in 1895. Pareto noticed that 80% of Italy's wealth belonged to only 20% of the population. He discovered that nearly all economic activity was subject to his principle. In business today, Pareto's 80/20 rule can be applied to learn how to prioritize your tasks: by days, weeks, and months.

This principle suggests that only two out of ten items on a to-do list will be worth more than the other eight items grouped together. In other words, 20% of their tasks are as valuable as the other 80% combined. Ironically, people tend to procrastinate on the 10% to 20% of tasks which are valuable to their success, and instead focus on the remaining 80%, which have very little bearing on their success.

According to time management guru, Brian Tracey: "The rule for this is: resist the temptation to clear up small things first." If you start your day working on low-value tasks, you will soon develop the habit of always starting and working on low-value tasks. It's better to complete the hardest, most important, task of your day first. Schedule your recurring tasks within the day.

Another useful strategy is to create a task list. This will enable you to become motivated about the task, get organized, delegate, and set milestones. Begin by listing your tasks and sub-tasks. Aim to break up the larger tasks into sub-tasks, so that the individual or even the team is not suddenly overwhelmed with work.

When creating tasks, be detailed, involve the entire team, and keep the timeline very much to the fore. Remember which people and processes worked together in the past and those that did not. Sort your tasks into priority, and allocate responsibility accordingly.

Using colors will help you to quickly scan your task list: for example, red for 'must do' tasks; yellow for tasks that you should do if you have the time; and green for low-priority tasks that you can postpone or delegate. Finally, tick off tasks as you complete them. This will help to motivate you and give you a sense of progress.

A third strategy is to plan ahead, strategically and realistically. Enlist the strategic thinking of others.

A fourth strategy is delegation. This is an important tool for using others' actions to help you complete your tasks. Before delegating, ask yourself the question: Is this task suitable for delegation, or would it be better to carry it out yourself?

So how can you delegate successfully? First, select the individual or team. You should delegate and ask a team to make its own decisions, bearing in mind that team's abilities. You can use a rising scale of levels of delegated freedom when working with your team.

Second, assess ability. When delegating a task, consider your instructions to the other person. Do they have the necessary skills and experience to get the job done? Do they need task-specific training?

Third, make it clear why you are delegating the task. Imagine if I were to approach you and state that there was a very important task that I wanted you to complete. I might say that there was no-one else with your skill-set who could do it, and that most importantly I trust you to complete this task for me. Doesn't that become an extremely powerful motivation for you?

Fourth, in advance, confer and agree on what the person requires to complete the delegated task. Discuss and agree what is required to get the job done. Consider resources, people available to assist, equipment, additional assistance, and so on.

Fifth, state required results. Clarify understanding by getting feedback from the other person. How will you jointly measure this task to completion?

Sixth, confirm deadlines. Ensure the person being delegated to understands what you want done, by when, and to what level. Also, if they have any issues or are unsure, ask the person to approach you. Make sure you are both in agreement at the beginning as to what is expected.

Seventh, frequently communicate. It is up to you to inform this person's peers of the task they have been delegated, especially if there are internal politics to be considered. In the early stages of the delegation, arrange frequent check-ins, which can diminish in frequency as the project progresses. Just prior to completion, arrange a further series of check-ins.

And finally, feedback on results. After the task has been completed, all stakeholders must be briefed on performance and if results were achieved. Also, all issues arising must be addressed. Accept the failures, thank the person, and ensure they receive positive credit for their effort.

So that's delegation. What other techniques can you use to manage your time? A fifth strategy is to batch your tasks. Despite what you might think, there's nothing more unproductive than multitasking! Trying to do many different things at the same time – and getting none of them fully completed – is not a good habit. According to time management guru Brian Tracey in his book Eat That Frog!: "It's estimated that the tendency to start and stop a task – to pick it up, put it down, and come back to it – can increase the time necessary to complete that task by as much as 500 percent."

To avoid this negative 'pick it up, put it down' behavior, try to batch your tasks. By batching all of your tasks together, you enable your brain to reach peak proficiency and focus on only one task at a time. For example, write all of your emails as a batch or make all of your phone calls as a batch. By batching, you improve your workflow.

A final strategy is to avoid procrastinating. Often, the main reason for procrastinating about important tasks is that they appear so large and difficult when you first approach them.

Have you heard of the Salami Method? This is where you can 'slice' the task down to size. And then, by completing one slice at a time, you are steadily eating away at the whole project. How do you eat an elephant? One bite at a time!

ELIMINATING PERSONAL TIME STEALERS

Let's now identify some personal time stealers - and how you can eliminate them!

One common time stealer is poor internal communication. You can combat this by setting up out-of-office replies on email accounts and setting up call forwarding.

Are you guilty of excessive viewing of email? A good tip is to set specific times for viewing email. This could be first thing in the morning, just before lunch, just after lunch, and just before you go home in the evening.

Interruptions from personal and electronic sources can steal a lot of time. To eliminate electronic interruptions, turn off all non-essential notifications on your desktop and mobile handset. And to deal with personal interruptions, close your office door. If you stand up when people approach you, it sends out a clear signal that you're keen to get back to work.

Arguably one of the most common time stealers is meetings. How can you deal with them? Do not attend a meeting if you are not going to contribute or be asked a question. Ensure there is an agenda and a time limit.

Procrastination occurs when you get stuck at the start of a task. If starting a task is a problem, don't start at the beginning, just start anywhere! Once you start working, you develop a sense of forward momentum and a feeling of accomplishment.

Distractions can steal a lot of your time. So keep your office environment and desk free from clutter.

Perfectionism can also lead to lost time. Learn to do tasks faster. Learn to speed-read.

Lack of planning is another problem. Make a realistic plan for your day. Ensure your objectives, priorities, and goals are clear. Automate your diary.

Do you regard traveling as wasted time? Try to complete small tasks while travelling.

You may be your own worst enemy. For example, do you suffer from lack of self-discipline? Get yourself to take action regardless of your emotional state.

Stress and fatigue can sap away your time. So ensure you have adequate rest. Take a vacation to re-charge, and work on achieving a work-life balance.

Do you find yourself constantly fighting fires at work? Try to pre-empt potential problems. Build time into schedules to cater for unforeseen events.

Indecision can waste a lot of your time, and other people's too. Learn to make clear and well-informed decisions.

Finally, delegate tasks where you can to suitably qualified personnel.

Once you are aware of your worst time stealers, you can take steps to tackle them!

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